

AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 22, 2004

SENATE BILL

No. 1369

Introduced by Senator Kuehl

February 18, 2004

An act to amend Section 51182 of the Government Code, *and to amend Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code*, relating to fire protection.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1369, as amended, Kuehl. Fire protection: ~~high fire hazard zones~~.

(1) Existing law requires any person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains any occupied dwelling or occupied structure in, upon, or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered land, brush-covered land, grass-covered land, or any land that is covered with flammable material, which area or land is within a very high fire hazard severity zone designated by the local agency, as provided, to, among other things, maintain around and adjacent to the occupied dwelling or occupied structure additional fire protection or firebreaks made by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth that is located from 30 to 100 feet from the occupied dwelling or occupied structure or to the property line, whichever is nearer, as may be required by the local agency if the agency finds that, because of extra hazardous conditions, a firebreak of only 30 feet around the occupied dwelling or occupied structure is not sufficient to provide reasonable fire safety.

Existing law requires a person that owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure, in, upon, or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or any land that is covered with flammable

material, to, among other things, maintain around and adjacent to the building or structure additional fire protection or a firebreak, by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth that is located from 30 to 100 feet from the building or structure or to the property line, whichever is nearer, as may be required by the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection, if he or she finds that, because of extra hazardous conditions, a firebreak of only 30 feet around the building or structure is not sufficient to provide reasonable fire safety.

This bill would revise *both of those requirements* to require those persons to remove all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth that is located within 100 feet from the occupied dwelling or occupied structure, *or building or structure, as applicable*, or to the property line, or at a greater distance if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation.

The bill would require an owner, prior to constructing a new dwelling or structure *that will be occupied* or reconstructing ~~a~~ *an occupied* dwelling or *occupied* structure damaged by a fire in a very high fire hazard severity zone, *or constructing a new building or structure or rebuilding a building or structure damaged by fire in one of those other specified areas*, to certify to the property insurance carrier that insures the *occupied* dwelling or *occupied* structure, *or building or structure*, that the dwelling, *building*, or structure, *as applicable*, will be constructed in compliance with all state and local building codes, including specified standards covering fire prevention. Because the bill would expand the definition of a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Existing law provides that a local agency having jurisdiction of property violating the above described conditions is required to notify the owner of the property to correct the conditions. If the owner fails to correct the conditions, the local agency is authorized to cause the corrections to be made, and the expenses incurred become a lien on the property when recorded, as specified, in the county recorder's office in the county in which the real property is located.

The bill would authorize the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection to authorize the removal of vegetation not consistent with these and related requirements. The bill would authorize a lien upon the building, structure, or grounds for the expense of the removal of that vegetation, as specified.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state.



Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 51182 of the Government Code is
2 amended to read:

3 51182. (a) Any person who owns, leases, controls, operates,
4 or maintains any occupied dwelling or occupied structure in, upon,
5 or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered land,
6 brush-covered land, grass-covered land, or any land that is covered
7 with flammable material, which area or land is within a very high
8 fire hazard severity zone designated by the local agency pursuant
9 to Section 51179, shall at all times do all of the following:

10 (1) Maintain around and adjacent to the occupied dwelling or
11 occupied structure a firebreak made by removing and clearing
12 away, for a distance of not less than 30 feet on each side thereof or
13 to the property line, whichever is nearer, all flammable vegetation
14 or other combustible growth. This paragraph does not apply to
15 single specimens of trees, ornamental shrubbery, or similar plants
16 that are used as ground cover, if they do not form a means of
17 rapidly transmitting fire from the native growth to any dwelling or
18 structure.

19 (2) Maintain around and adjacent to the occupied dwelling or
20 occupied structure additional fire protection or firebreaks made by
21 removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth
22 that is located within 100 feet from the occupied dwelling or
23 occupied structure or to the property line, or at a greater distance
24 if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation. This
25 section does not prevent an insurance company that insures an
26 occupied dwelling or occupied structure from requiring the owner
27 of the dwelling or structure to maintain a firebreak of more than
28 100 feet around the dwelling or structure if a hazardous condition
29 warrants such a firebreak of a greater distance. Grass and other
30 vegetation located more than 30 feet from the dwelling or structure
31 and less than 18 inches in height above the ground may be

1 maintained where necessary to stabilize the soil and prevent
2 erosion.

3 (3) Remove that portion of any trees that extends within 10 feet
4 of the outlet of any chimney or stovepipe.

5 (4) Maintain any tree adjacent to or overhanging any building
6 free of dead or dying wood.

7 (5) Maintain the roof of any structure free of leaves, needles,
8 or other dead vegetative growth.

9 (6) Provide and maintain at all times a screen over the outlet of
10 every chimney or stovepipe that is attached to any fireplace, stove,
11 or other device that burns any solid or liquid fuel. The screen shall
12 be constructed and installed in accordance with the California
13 Building Standards Code.

14 (7) Prior to constructing a new dwelling or structure that will
15 be occupied or rebuilding an occupied dwelling or occupied
16 structure damaged by a fire in such zone, the owner shall certify
17 to the property insurance carrier that insures the dwelling or
18 structure that it will be constructed in compliance with all
19 applicable state and local building standards, including those
20 described in subdivision (b) of Section 51189.

21 (b) A person is not required under this section to maintain any
22 clearing on any land if that person does not have the legal right to
23 maintain the clearing, nor is any person required to enter upon or
24 to damage property that is owned by any other person without the
25 consent of the owner of the property.

26 SEC. 2. *Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code is*
27 *amended to read:*

28 4291. ~~Any~~ A person that owns, leases, controls, operates, or
29 maintains ~~any~~ a building or structure in, upon, or adjoining any
30 mountainous area ~~or~~, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands,
31 ~~or~~ grass-covered lands, or any land ~~which~~ that is covered with
32 flammable material, shall at all times do all of the following:

33 (a) Maintain around and adjacent to ~~such~~ the building or
34 structure a firebreak made by removing and clearing away, for a
35 distance of not less than 30 feet on each side ~~thereof of the building~~
36 ~~or structure~~ or to the property line, whichever is nearer, all
37 flammable vegetation or other combustible growth. This
38 subdivision does not apply to single specimens of trees,
39 ornamental shrubbery, or similar plants ~~which~~ that are used as



ground cover, if they do not form a means of rapidly transmitting fire from the native growth to any building or structure.

(b) Maintain around and adjacent to ~~any such~~ *the* building or structure additional fire protection or firebreak made by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth ~~which that~~ *is located from 30 feet to within 100 feet from such the* building or structure or to the property line, ~~whichever is nearer, as may be required by the director if he finds that, because of extra hazardous conditions, a firebreak of only 30 feet around such building or structure is not sufficient to provide reasonable fire safety or at a greater distance if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation. This section does not prevent an insurance company that insures a building or structure from requiring the owner of the building or structure to maintain a firebreak of more than 100 feet around the building or structure if a hazardous condition warrants a firebreak of a greater distance.~~ Grass and other vegetation located more than 30 feet from ~~such the~~ building or structure and less than 18 inches in height above the ground may be maintained where necessary to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion.

(c) Remove that portion of any tree ~~which that~~ extends within 10 feet of the outlet of ~~any a~~ chimney or stovepipe.

(d) Maintain any tree adjacent to or overhanging ~~any a~~ building free of dead or dying wood.

(e) Maintain the roof of ~~any a~~ structure free of leaves, needles, or other dead vegetative growth.

(f) Provide and maintain at all times a screen over the outlet of every chimney or stovepipe that is attached to ~~any a~~ fireplace, stove, or other device that burns any solid or liquid fuel. The screen shall be constructed of nonflammable material with openings of not more than one-half inch in size.

(g) *Prior to constructing a new building or structure or rebuilding a building or structure damaged by a fire in such an area, the owner shall certify to the property insurance carrier that insures the building or structure that it will be constructed in compliance with all applicable state and local building standards, including those described in subdivision (b) of Section 51189 of the Government Code.*

(h) Except as provided in Section 18930 of the Health and Safety Code, the director may adopt regulations exempting

1 structures with exteriors constructed entirely of nonflammable
2 materials, or conditioned upon the contents and composition of
3 same, he *or she* may vary the requirements respecting the
4 removing or clearing away of flammable vegetation or other
5 combustible growth with respect to the area surrounding ~~said~~ those
6 structures.

7 No ~~such~~ exemption or variance shall apply unless and until the
8 occupant thereof, or if there ~~be no~~ *is not an* occupant, ~~then~~ the
9 owner thereof, files with the department, in ~~such~~ *a* form as the
10 director shall prescribe, a written consent to the inspection of the
11 interior and contents of ~~such~~ *the* structure to ascertain whether ~~the~~
12 ~~provisions hereof~~ *this section* and the regulations adopted
13 ~~hereunder~~ *under this section* are complied with at all times.

14 *(i) The director may authorize the removal of vegetation that is*
15 *not consistent with the standards of this section. The director may*
16 *prescribe a procedure for the removal of that vegetation and make*
17 *the expense a lien upon the building, structure, or grounds, in the*
18 *same manner that is applicable to a legislative body under Section*
19 *51186 of the Government Code.*

20 SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to
21 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because
22 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school
23 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or
24 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty
25 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of
26 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within
27 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California
28 Constitution.

